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POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS
FRANKFURT FOR KBROUGHAM

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN FRAUD SUMMARY MARCH - SEPTEMBER 2009

1. Country Conditions: Kyrgyzstan is a Central Asian republic of five million people. Agriculture plays an important role in the Kyrgyz economy, which has not been as heavily affected by the global economic downturn as some neighboring countries. Nonetheless, poverty and high unemployment lead many to pursue work abroad. Most migrant workers are in the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, and Turkey. Experts report that approximately 10% of Kyrgyzstan's citizens are living abroad. According to the World Bank, in 2008 overseas Kyrgyz sent \$1.45 billion in remittances to family members in country - an amount equivalent to 29% of the national GDP. However, remittances declined approximately 30% in the first half of 2009 compared to the previous year. Inflation jumped to approximately 30% in 2008, and increases in food and fuel prices made conditions difficult. In 2009, the inflation rate is projected to be 8%. Unemployment is estimated to be 12 - 18%. Travel to and from Kyrgyzstan is difficult and expensive. The majority of Kyrgyz vacation within Kyrgyzstan rather than abroad. It is uncommon to encounter an NIV applicant who has traveled to destinations other than Kazakhstan or Russia.

In the mountainous north of the country, the majority of the population is Kyrgyz, while the south, which contains part of the Ferghana valley, has a significant Uzbek population. Kyrgyzstan's ethnic minorities also include Russians, ethnic Germans, Koreans, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and Uighurs. Members of these groups have made asylum claims in the U.S. based on religious and political foundations, though there have been no serious conflicts or organized ethnic repression in Kyrgyzstan in the recent past.

2. NIV Fraud: NIV fraud primarily consists of fraudulent supporting documents, such as bad letters of invitation, false bank statements, or fake job letters. Many applicants open bank accounts a few days before their visa interview and temporarily deposit a large sum of borrowed money. Post continues to see a steady stream of applicants wishing to study at community colleges or in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs that are low cost and located near friends or relatives in the US. Most student visa applicants do not plan to study in fields related to their majors, as required by their local universities in order to receive study abroad credit. New York remains the destination of choice for both students and tourists who apply for NIVs.

Post has received unsubstantiated reports that fraudulent Kyrgyz diplomatic passports have been issued and that slots to 'participate' in official delegations have been offered for sale. Post has not yet encountered any fraud in diplomatic or official visa applications, but does carefully review all such applications.

Post generally processes about 1,000 Summer Work and Travel (SWT) applications. Though the incidence of fraud among students is usually low, post did discover an agency providing fraudulent student documentation for SWT applicants. During its routine procedure to verify the student status of all SWT applicants, post discovered documents from various school administrators with strangely similar signatures. The documents came from students at a

school from which post had never received applications before. Post confirmed with the university that the documents were not legitimate. Upon detailed questioning, several applicants admitted that they had paid an agent for the fake documents. The owner of the Silk Road agency providing the documents is a naturalized American citizen from Kyrgyzstan. With assistance from RSO, Kyrgyz authorities moved quickly to arrest the woman. However, she was released later the same day, presumably based on her personal ties with the Prosecutor's Office.

A validation study conducted on SWT applicants revealed that 25% of issued students failed to return, about half of whom legally changed to F-1 status. The majority of these students had been attending prestigious Kyrgyz universities and enrolled in less expensive community colleges in the States.

Post has recently begun receiving calls from locals inquiring whether their visas were ready, despite the fact they had never applied with post or come in for interviews. They apparently had gone through an agent who had told them the agency could, for a fee, arrange 'work visas' for the U.S. The callers usually hang up before consular staff is able to elicit more detailed information. Post will continue to attempt to get more information on the situation from callers.

13. IV Fraud: Post does not adjudicate immigrant visas but does accept petitions for processing in Almaty. The majority of petitions involve Kyrgyz women marrying US citizens who are contractors or servicemen at the Manas Transit Center. There have been no significant trends in IV fraud, though post has seen an increase in the number of U.S. petitioners who "forget" to list previous marriages in order to avoid having to secure divorce records.

14. DV Fraud: Post does not process diversity visas.

15. ACS and Passport Fraud: Though overall passport and CRBA issuance is relatively low in Bishkek, the level is rising due to the large number of contractors working at the military transit center. During the reporting period, post encountered one CRBA application where the U.S. citizen claimed to be the biological father for the child who was born out of wedlock in 1998. Interviewing officer realized that travel dates indicated that the supposed father and mother were not in the same place at the time of conception. Upon further questioning and suggestion of DNA testing, the Kyrgyz biological mother confessed that the father on the application was not the biological father.

Post has seen an increase in internet 'dating fraud' against U.S. citizens. After making contact and developing a relationship online, the person in Kyrgyzstan begins making requests for money -- usually to pay for visa applications, air tickets, or even emergency medical bills. The scammer is not planning to travel to meet the American citizen and is simply keeping the money that is sent. Post worked with RSO on these investigations and informed inquirers of the dangers of money transfer to unknown parties.

16. Adoption Fraud: Post did not process adoption cases during the reporting period. In October 2008, the Kyrgyz government instituted a moratorium on international adoptions, citing the need to root out corruption. There are currently 65 U.S. families whose in-process adoptions have been held up by the moratorium.

Though violation of Kyrgyz laws by local adoption agencies prompted the government's moratorium and investigation, post saw no fraud in relation to U.S. visa regulations. In the past two years, post found no cases involving intra-family adoption for educational or economic purposes, forged birth-parent signatures, or children that did not meet orphan classification according to 9 FAM. The corruption that led to the moratorium generally involved local adoption agencies not following mandatory wait times designed to allow local citizens exclusive rights to adoption during a child's first three months.

17. Use of DNA testing: During the reporting period, post did not have any cases that required DNA testing. In general, post rarely has the need to recommend DNA testing.

¶18. Asylum and other DHS benefit fraud: Post does not normally process asylum cases but is occasionally called upon to verify locally issued documents supporting asylum and immigration applications at other posts.

¶19. Alien Smuggling, Trafficking, Organized Crime, and Terrorist Travel: Kyrgyzstan is a country of origin and transit for human trafficking. As outlined in Bishkek's 2009 Trafficking in Persons report, trafficking occurs for both forced labor and sexual exploitation. The majority of victims travel to Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey or the UAE.

Due to the widespread fraudulent sale of the pre-2004 Kyrgyz passport, the US government ceased to recognize it as a valid travel document. This old version of the Kyrgyz passport was discovered to be a key tool for traffickers in transporting victims out of Kyrgyzstan. Citizens of CIS countries do not need a passport to enter Kyrgyzstan - only an ID card.

The Embassy places restrictions on USG personnel for travel to Batken Oblast due to security and terrorism concerns. In May 2006, suspected militants attacked a border post in that region. Six members of government security forces were killed. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and other terrorist organizations remain active in Central Asia. In June 2009, Kyrgyz government forces arrested members of suspected Islamic Jihad Union - affiliated terrorist cells in Jala-abad and Osh. One government soldier was killed along with at least three militants in the incidents. Last spring several gunfire exchanges occurred across the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border which were believed to involve Islamic militants. Local press has also reported on "invasions" by Tajiks into Kyrgyz valleys.

¶10. DS Criminal Investigations: Post does not have an RSO-I but works well with the RSO on related cases. Post has not referred any cases to RSO for investigation during this reporting period.

¶11. Host Country Passport, Identity Documents, and Civil Registry: Practically any document issued in the country can be fraudulently obtained for a price. The procedures for issuance of civil documents are similar to those in the Russian Federation and other former Soviet Republics. A birth or death is recorded on a certificate issued by a hospital. This certificate has no security features other than a stamp. The bearer then files it with their regional Vital Records Office. The only record of birth for foreigners is the certificate issued by the hospital where the birth occurred - a document that is vulnerable to fraud.

Negligence and corruption in the Kyrgyz passport agency led to large-scale sale of fraudulent passports. Authorities de-recognized the 1994 Kyrgyz passport and replaced it with a significantly more secure document in 2004. In recent years, post received reports of government officials selling passports and birth certificates. The previous head of the Kyrgyz Consular Department was dismissed in December 2008, reportedly for selling official passports to citizens not affiliated with the government.

¶12. Cooperation with Kyrgyz authorities: Cooperation with the host government on visa and immigration matters is good. Post continues to build its relationship with the airport Border Guards and officials at the Public Records Office.

¶13. Areas of particular concern: Post's main area of concern is possible fraud related to the Summer Work and Travel Program. Post will continue to closely monitor SWT to assure that all applicants are genuinely qualified students.

¶14. Staffing and training: Currently, the Fraud Prevention Unit is staffed by the Consular Section Chief, who is the sole consular officer at post, and a Fraud Investigator. The Fraud Investigator has completed CA's on-line fraud training, is in the process of completing the consular correspondence courses, and has attended Anti-Fraud Training at FSI.

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